

DUE PROCESS IN IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS

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DUE PROCESS IN IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS

I. Due Process

A. Generally

“Immigration proceedings, although not subject to the full range of constitutional protections, must conform to the Fifth Amendment’s requirement of due process.” *Salgado-Diaz v. Gonzales*, [395 F.3d 1158, 1162](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *see also Campos-Sanchez v. INS*, [164 F.3d 448, 450](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (“The Fifth Amendment guarantees due process in deportation proceedings.”). “[A]n alien who faces deportation is entitled to a full and fair hearing of his claims and a reasonable opportunity to present evidence on his behalf.” *Colmenar v. INS*, [210 F.3d 967, 971](#) (9th Cir. 2000); *see also Cano-Merida v. INS*, [311 F.3d 960, 964](#) (9th Cir. 2002). Removing an alien from the United States without any procedural safeguards of a formal hearing may result in a due process violation. *See Salgado-Diaz*, [395 F.3d at 1162-63](#) (“[F]ailing to afford petitioner an evidentiary hearing on his serious allegations of having been unlawfully stopped and expelled from the United States, aborting his pending immigration proceedings and the relief available to him at the time, violated his right to due process of law.”).

This court reviews de novo claims of due process violations. *Ibarra-Flores v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 614, 620](#) (9th Cir. 2006). “The BIA’s decision will be reversed on due process grounds if (1) the proceeding was so fundamentally unfair that the alien was prevented from reasonably presenting his case, and (2) the alien demonstrates prejudice, which means that the outcome of the proceeding may have been affected by the alleged violation.” *Id.* at 620-21 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted); *see also Shin v. Mukasey*, [519 F.3d 901, 906](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (explaining that to successfully attack on due process grounds the conclusions and orders made during removal hearings “it must be shown that the proceedings were manifestly unfair and that the actions of the [immigration judge] were such as to prevent a fair investigation”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)).

“Where an alien is given a full and fair opportunity to be represented by counsel, prepare an application for . . . relief, and to present testimony and other

evidence in support of the application, he or she has been provided with due process.” *Vargas-Hernandez v. Gonzales*, [497 F.3d 919, 926-27](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

Due process violations have been identified in cases where the IJ prevented full examination of the applicant, *Colmenar*, [210 F.3d at 972](#), the IJ stood in moral judgment of the alien, *Reyes-Melendez v. INS*, [342 F.3d 1001, 1007-09](#) (9th Cir. 2003), and where the IJ pressured an alien to drop a claim for relief that he was entitled to pursue, *Cano-Merida*, [311 F.3d at 964-65](#).

Although aliens are entitled to due process of law, they “must in the first instance possess a liberty or property interest.” *Valencia-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [469 F.3d 1319, 1330 n.13](#) (9th Cir. 2006). If an alien was never eligible for the discretionary relief sought, then he does not have a liberty or property interest that can be affected. See *id.* (rejecting due process claim that [8 U.S.C. § 1229b\(d\)\(1\)\(B\)](#) as applied to petitioner’s case denied him due process because he was not eligible for discretionary relief, and thus had no liberty or property interest); see also *Sandoval-Luna v. Mukasey*, [526 F.3d 1243, 1247](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam). The denial of discretionary relief cannot violate a substantive due process interest, because discretionary relief is a privilege created by Congress. See *Tovar-Landin v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1164, 1167](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (voluntary departure); *Munoz v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 950, 954](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (cancellation of removal). However, note that violations of procedural due process and claims of ineffective assistance of counsel, “which are predicated on the right to a full and fair hearing, are not affected by the nature of the relief sought.” *Fernandez v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 592, 602 n.8](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (citation omitted); see also *United States v. Ubaldo-Figueroa*, [364 F.3d 1042, 1050-51](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (concluding that alien was prejudiced by “the IJ’s unconstitutional failure to inform him that he was eligible for § 212(c) relief”).

B. Prejudice Requirement

In addition to showing a due process violation, an applicant must show prejudice. *Cano-Merida v. INS*, [311 F.3d 960, 965](#) (9th Cir. 2002). Prejudice is shown where the violation potentially affected the outcome of the proceedings. *Id.* “The standard does not demand absolute certainty” *Zolotukhin v. Gonzales*, [417 F.3d 1073, 1077](#) (9th Cir. 2005). An applicant “need not explain exactly what evidence he would have presented in support of his application, and [the court]

may infer prejudice in the absence of any specific allegation as to what evidence [the applicant] would have presented.” *Cano-Merida*, [311 F.3d at 965](#) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted); *see also* *Zolotukhin*, [417 F.3d at 1077](#); *Colmenar v. INS*, [210 F.3d 967, 972](#) (9th Cir. 2000).

Examples of cases where prejudice has been established include: *Circu v. Gonzales*, [450 F.3d 990, 994-95](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc) (IJ failed to give petitioner advance notice of reliance on State Department country report containing disputable facts that were not in record); *Yeghiazaryan v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 994, 1000](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (BIA refused to consider new evidence submitted with motion to reconsider, and thereby compounded the harm of faulty translation at alien’s IJ hearing, which “resulted in the IJ’s fatal misunderstanding of a dispositive moment” in the alien’s testimony); *Ibarra-Flores v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 614, 621](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (IJ refused to order the government to produce voluntary departure form for petitioner and outcome of proceedings “may have been affected if the requested discovery had been ordered”); *Lopez-Umanzor v. Gonzales*, [405 F.3d 1049, 1058-59](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (IJ violated due process in refusing to hear relevant expert testimony regarding domestic violence, where the testimony could have affected the IJ’s assessment of credibility); *Salgado-Diaz v. Gonzales*, [395 F.3d 1158, 1164](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (“[T]he failure of the IJ to hold an evidentiary hearing prejudiced petitioner by denying him the opportunity to show he would never have been taken out of his deportation proceeding.”); *Zolotukhin*, [417 F.3d at 1077](#) (concluding outcome of case may have been different absent cumulative due process violations); *Kaur v. Ashcroft*, [388 F.3d 734, 737-38](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (IJ’s failure to allow alien’s son to testify as a corroborating witness resulted in prejudice); *Reyes-Melendez v. INS*, [342 F.3d 1001, 1008-09](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (IJ’s bias prevented IJ from “considering, yet alone weighing, the impact” that the separation of the alien from his son would have on hardship); *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 884-85](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (pro se alien was prejudiced by IJ’s failure adequately to explain how to prove existence of marriage, and IJ’s failure to sufficiently develop the record); *Cano-Merida*, [311 F.3d at 965](#) (where IJ pressured alien to drop asylum claim before developing facts, and made other decisions indicating he was not interested in hearing evidence or adequately explaining procedures, the “IJ’s conduct undercut the normal course of the proceedings,” and alien demonstrated prejudice); *Colmenar*, [210 F.3d at 972](#) (alien prejudiced by IJ preventing a full examination of the alien and prejudging the alien’s case).

Cf. Avila-Sanchez v. Mukasey, [509 F.3d 1037, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (even if there were some error resulting from different IJs presiding over portions of separate proceedings, alien failed to show prejudice); *Ngongo v. Ashcroft*, [397 F.3d 821, 823-24](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (no prejudice where witnesses were presented in a different order than originally planned); *United States v. Jimenez-Borja*, [378 F.3d 853, 859](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (although IJ's failure to advise petitioner of available relief resulted in a due process violation, there was no prejudice because alien "could not plausibly demonstrate" eligibility for the relief); *Simeonov v. Ashcroft*, [371 F.3d 532, 538](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (even assuming a due process violation there was no prejudice because alien not eligible for relief as a matter of law).

1. Presumption of Prejudice

Where counsel's error deprives an alien of appellate proceedings, there is a presumption of prejudice. *See Ray v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 582, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2006). If the alien is entitled to a presumption of prejudice because she was deprived of appellate review, that presumption may be rebutted by the government. *Siong v. INS*, [376 F.3d 1030, 1037](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *see also Rojas-Garcia v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 814, 826-28](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (applying presumption of prejudice, but denying petition for review because presumption was rebutted). The presumption is not rebutted if the alien can show plausible grounds for relief. *Siong*, [376 F.3d at 1037](#); *Ray*, [439 F.3d at 587](#). To determine if the alien has demonstrated plausible grounds for relief, the court looks to whether "the [IJ or the BIA] could plausibly have held that [the petitioner] was [eligible for relief] based on the record before it." *Ray*, [439 F.3d at 589](#) (internal quotation marks omitted).

Examples of cases where prejudice was presumed include: *Ray*, [439 F.3d at 588-89](#) (multiple attorneys failed to litigate alien's case in timely fashion); *Siong*, [376 F.3d at 1038](#) (counsel failed to file a timely notice of appeal); *Rojas-Garcia*, [339 F.3d at 826](#) (counsel failed to file brief with BIA, resulting in summary dismissal of alien's appeal); *Dearinger ex rel. Volkova v. Reno*, [232 F.3d 1042, 1045](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (counsel failed to file a timely petition for review).

C. Exhaustion Requirement

[8 U.S.C. § 1252\(d\)\(1\)](#) mandates exhaustion and generally bars this court from reaching the merits of a claim not presented in administrative proceedings below. *Barron v. Ashcroft*, [358 F.3d 674, 678](#) (9th Cir. 2004). “The exhaustion requirement applies to claims that an alien was denied a full and fair hearing.” *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 877](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). The court may not entertain due process claims that allege a procedural error correctable by the BIA unless exhausted before the agency. *See Barron*, [358 F.3d at 678](#) (alleged errors of absence of counsel and lack of opportunity to present case were procedural in nature and required to be exhausted); *see also Huang v. Mukasey*, [520 F.3d 1006, 1008](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) (dismissing claims of incompetent translation and denial of opportunity to testify because petitioner failed to exhaust the claims before the BIA); *Sanchez-Cruz v. INS*, [255 F.3d 775, 779-80](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (determining that petitioner presented a colorable due process claim based on IJ’s failure to act as neutral fact-finder, but concluding claim could not be considered for failure to exhaust). *Cf. Granados-Oseguera v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 993, 997](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (rehearing granted) (reviewing ineffective assistance of counsel claim not raised before BIA where petitioner asserted a due process violation and did not have an earlier opportunity to raise it due to the inadequacy of prior counsel).

A due process claim may be sufficiently exhausted even if the phrase “due process” is not used before the agency. *See Agyeman*, [296 F.3d at 877-78](#) (due process claim was exhausted even though alien did not use phrase “due process violation” before the agency). When a petitioner raises his claims before the agency pro se, the court will construe them liberally. *Id. at 878*. *Cf. Tall v. Mukasey*, [517 F.3d 1115, 1120](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (concluding that petitioner’s claim that he was denied a full and fair hearing was not properly exhausted, where petitioner raised a different procedural claim before the BIA).

“[T]he principle of exhaustion may exclude certain constitutional challenges that are not within the competence of administrative agencies to decide.” *Barron*, [358 F.3d at 678](#). For example, substantive due process claims that the agency has no power to adjudicate need not be raised before the BIA. *See Morgan v. Gonzales*, [495 F.3d 1084, 1089-90](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *see also Saravia-Paguada v. Gonzales*, [488 F.3d 1122, 1130](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (considering retroactivity challenge raising due process concerns, even though not exhausted); *Garcia-Ramirez v. Gonzales*, [423 F.3d 935, 938](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (per curiam) (“Retroactivity challenges to immigration laws implicate legitimate due process

considerations that need not be exhausted in administrative proceedings because the BIA cannot give relief on such claims.”). Additionally, exhaustion is not required where it would be “futile or impossible.” *See Singh v. Ashcroft*, [362 F.3d 1164, 1169](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

D. Discretionary Decisions

The court lacks jurisdiction to review an abuse of discretion argument that is merely recharacterized as a due process argument. *Torres-Aguilar v. INS*, [246 F.3d 1267, 1271](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (contention that the agency violated due process by misapplying facts to the applicable law did not state a colorable constitutional claim); *Martinez-Rosas v. Gonzales*, [424 F.3d 926, 930](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (same, post-REAL ID Act); *see also Bazua-Cota v. Gonzales*, [466 F.3d 747, 748-49](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (per curiam) (order) (claim that BIA violated due process by failing properly to weigh equities before denying adjustment of status application was not a colorable constitutional claim).

However, the court retains jurisdiction to consider both constitutional claims and questions of law raised in a petition for review of a discretionary decision. *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(2)(D); *see also Fernandez-Ruiz v. Gonzales*, [410 F.3d 585, 587](#) (9th Cir. 2005), *as adopted by* [466 F.3d 1121, 1124](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc); *Tovar-Landin v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1164, 1166](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (due process and equal protection challenges to voluntary departure regime); *Munoz v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 950, 954-56](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process, ineffective assistance of counsel, and equitable tolling contentions); *Vasquez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [324 F.3d 1105, 1107-09](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (due process claim); *Ramirez-Alejandre v. Ashcroft*, [320 F.3d 858, 869](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (en banc) (superceded by regulation on other grounds) (due process challenge to the BIA’s refusal to allow applicant for suspension of deportation to supplement the record); *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 876-77](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (suspension of deportation applicant’s due process claim). To invoke the court’s jurisdiction, the constitutional claim must be colorable. *See Torres-Aguilar*, [246 F.3d at 1271](#). “To be colorable in this context, the alleged [constitutional] violation need not be substantial, but the claim must have some possible validity.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks and citation omitted); *see also Martinez-Rosas*, [424 F.3d at 930](#).

For instance, this court may consider whether the BIA’s interpretation of the exceptional and extremely unusual hardship standard of [8 U.S.C. §](#)

[1229b\(b\)\(1\)\(D\)](#) violated due process, although the ultimate hardship determination is a discretionary decision. *See Ramirez-Perez v. Ashcroft*, [336 F.3d 1001, 1004-06](#) (9th Cir. 2003).

E. Examples

1. Notice to Appear

“The [Notice to Appear] served on an alien in removal proceedings must contain the nature of the proceedings against the alien, the legal authority under which the proceedings are conducted, the acts or conduct alleged to be in violation of the law, and the charges against the alien and the statutory provisions alleged to have been violated.” *Salviejo-Fernandez v. Gonzales*, [455 F.3d 1063, 1066](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (citing [8 U.S.C. § 1229\(a\)\(1\)](#)) (internal quotation marks omitted). This court has held that “due process does not require inclusion of charges in the [Notice to Appear] that are not grounds for removal but are grounds for denial of relief from removal.” *Id.* (rejecting alien’s claim that his due process rights were violated where he was denied relief from removal based on a conviction that was not alleged in the Notice to Appear as a ground for removal).

2. Notice of Hearing

Due process requires notice of an immigration hearing that is reasonably calculated to reach the alien. *See Khan v. Ashcroft*, [374 F.3d 825, 829](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *Flores-Chavez v. Ashcroft*, [362 F.3d 1150, 1155-56](#) (9th Cir. 2004); *Farhoud v. INS*, [122 F.3d 794, 796](#) (9th Cir. 1997). If petitioners do not receive actual or constructive notice of deportation proceedings, “it would be a violation of their rights under the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution to deport them in absentia.” *Andia v. Ashcroft*, [359 F.3d 1181, 1185](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (per curiam). *See generally Jones v. Flowers*, [547 U.S. 220](#) (2006).

A petitioner does not always “have to actually receive notice of a deportation hearing in order for the requirements of due process to be satisfied.” *Farhoud*, [122 F.3d at 796](#) (holding with respect to former [8 U.S.C. § 1252b\(c\)\(1\)](#) that notice was sufficient where mailed to applicant’s last address). *Cf. Dobrota v. INS*, [311 F.3d 1206, 1211-13](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (remanding where government’s efforts to provide alien notice were not reasonably calculated to reach alien

because he reasonably relied on notice being provided to his attorney); *Flores-Chavez*, [362 F.3d at 1162-63](#) (holding that due process concerns counsel against accepting government’s position that regulations do not require notice of proceedings to be given to responsible “adults taking custody of minor aliens”). “Actual notice is, however, sufficient to meet due process requirements.” *Khan*, [374 F.3d at 829-30](#) (holding that a second notice in English was sufficient to advise petitioner of his hearing when petitioner had earlier appeared in response to a notice in English but reserving the question whether due process requires the government to provide translation at a master calendar hearing). *Cf. Sembiring v. Gonzales*, [499 F.3d 981, 988-89](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (alien demonstrated nonreceipt of hearing notice for purpose of rescinding in absentia order).

3. Hearing Date

This court has found that an IJ’s unilateral advancement of a hearing date did not violate the alien’s due process rights where a hearing was held and the alien had the opportunity to argue on his behalf, was given an opportunity to explain the circumstances regarding a change in attorneys, and where he was given three months in which to file his applications for relief. *Mendez-Mendez v. Mukasey*, [525 F.3d 828, 835](#) (9th Cir. 2008).

4. Right to a Neutral Fact-Finder

“A neutral judge is one of the most basic due process protections.” *Reyes-Melendez v. INS*, [342 F.3d 1001, 1006](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (internal quotation marks omitted). Where an IJ fails to act as a neutral fact-finder, but rather as a partisan adjudicator, the alien’s due process rights may be violated. *See Colmenar v. INS*, [210 F.3d 967, 971](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (due process violation where “the IJ behaved not as a neutral fact-finder interested in hearing the petitioner’s evidence, but as a partisan adjudicator seeking to intimidate Colmenar and his counsel”); *see also Reyes-Melendez*, [342 F.3d at 1006-09](#) (holding that due process required remand in suspension of deportation case where IJ was “aggressive,” “snide,” and accused applicant of moral impropriety and that IJ’s moral bias against petitioner precluded full consideration of the relevant hardship factors). *Cf. Rivera v. Mukasey*, [508 F.3d 1271, 1276](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (concluding that the IJ’s comments did not rise to the level of prejudgment or a due process violation and that petitioner failed to show “the IJ had a deep-seated favoritism or antagonism that

would make fair judgment impossible” (internal quotation marks omitted)); *Vargas-Hernandez v. Gonzales*, [497 F.3d 919, 926](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (allegations of bias were undermined by the IJ’s professional behavior and the decision considered all issues raised by alien).

An IJ’s pre-judgment of the merits of an alien’s case has been held to violate an alien’s due process rights. *See Zolotukhin v. Gonzales*, [417 F.3d 1073, 1075](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (due process violation where IJ’s pre-judgment, including the exclusion of the testimony of several key witnesses, led to the alien not receiving a full and fair opportunity to present evidence on his behalf); *see also Lopez-Umanzor v. Gonzales*, [405 F.3d 1049, 1058-59](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (concluding that the petitioner’s right to due process was violated because “the IJ’s disbelief of Petitioner rested on personal speculation, bias, conjecture, and prejudgment” and the IJ refused to allow petitioner to challenge those views by presenting expert testimony); *Cano-Merida v. INS*, [311 F.3d 960, 964-65](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (alien deprived of neutral judge where IJ indicated that he had “already judged” the pro se alien’s asylum claim).

If the factual record adequately supports the denial of relief, the court cannot conclude that the IJ’s alleged bias was the basis for the denial of the application. *See Rivera*, [508 F.3d at 1276](#).

In cases where a due process violation was established, the court has on occasion directed that a case be reassigned to a new IJ on remand. *See Nuru v. Gonzales*, [404 F.3d 1207, 1229](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (directing that case be reassigned on remand where some of the IJ’s comments during the hearing and in his oral decision were “highly caustic and without substance”); *Smolnikova v. Gonzales*, [422 F.3d 1037, 1054](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (directing BIA not to return the case to the IJ who originally heard the matter); *Lopez-Umanzor*, [405 F.3d at 1059](#) (remanding for a new hearing and suggesting it be held before a different IJ); *Perez-Lastor v. INS*, [208 F.3d 773, 783](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (suggesting to the BIA that a new hearing be held before a different IJ).

Note that the due process clause does not prevent an IJ from examining a witness. *See Melkonian v. Ashcroft*, [320 F.3d 1061, 1072](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (rejecting due process claim based on the IJ’s aggressive and harsh questioning); *see also Halaim v. INS*, [358 F.3d 1128, 1137](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (recognizing that IJ

has authority to interrogate, examine and cross-examine the alien and any witnesses, and concluding that the alleged misconduct did not rise to level of intimidation or advocacy for the agency); *Antonio-Cruz v. INS*, [147 F.3d 1129, 1131](#) (9th Cir. 1998) (rejecting due process claim premised on fact that IJ conducted “the lion’s share of cross-examination” in a “harsh manner and tone”).

5. Pressure to Withdraw Application

An IJ’s pressuring an applicant to withdraw an application for relief without providing an opportunity to present testimony may result in a due process violation. *See Cano-Merida v. INS*, [311 F.3d 960, 964-65](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (due process violation where the IJ pressured a pro se asylum applicant to withdraw his application and to accept voluntary departure, without giving him an opportunity to present oral testimony at the hearing).

6. Apparent Eligibility for Relief

The IJ must inform an alien of “apparent eligibility” for relief. *See Bui v. INS*, [76 F.3d 268, 270-71](#) (9th Cir. 1996). “Apparent eligibility” for relief under immigration laws is a “reasonable possibility that the alien may be eligible for relief.” *Id.* at 270; *see also United States v. Ortiz-Lopez*, [385 F.3d 1202, 1204-05](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (per curiam) (due process violation where IJ failed to inform alien he was eligible for voluntary departure).

7. Explanation of Procedures

“[T]he IJ must adequately explain the hearing procedures to the alien, including what he must prove to establish his basis for relief.” *Agyeman v. INS*, [296 F.3d 871, 877](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (due process violation where IJ failed adequately to explain procedures to pro se alien; IJ had an obligation to assist the pro se applicant in determining what evidence was relevant, and to explain how he could prove his claims); *see also Jacinto v. INS*, [208 F.3d 725, 728](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (due process violation where alien appeared pro se and IJ failed sufficiently to explain that alien could be a witness even without an attorney, inadequately explained hearing procedures, and failed to explain what the alien had to prove to establish eligibility for asylum).

8. Exclusion of Evidence or Testimony

“[A]n alien who faces deportation is entitled to a . . . reasonable opportunity to present evidence on his behalf.” *Colmenar v. INS*, [210 F.3d 967, 971](#) (9th Cir. 2000). The IJ’s exclusion of proffered evidence may result in a due process violation. *See Ladha v. INS*, [215 F.3d 889, 905](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (remanding for clarification of petitioner’s due process claims based on the exclusion of two documents). However, for the court to determine if a due process violation resulted, the record “must contain a sufficient indication of the content of excluded evidence to allow [the court] to review the exclusion for fundamental fairness.” *Id.*

Preventing an alien from presenting testimony that may corroborate claims of past persecution may also result in a due process violation by depriving an alien of a reasonable opportunity to present evidence in support of his claim. *See Zolotukhin v. Gonzales*, [417 F.3d 1073, 1075-76](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (alien’s due process rights violated where the IJ barred him from presenting his mother’s testimony, refused to permit family members to develop the record as to the family’s persecution, and refused to hear testimony from alien’s expert witness); *see also Morgan v. Mukasey*, [529 F.3d 1202, 1210-11](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (IJ violated due process by refusing to allow applicants’ two children to testify on the basis that they did not appear on the pretrial witness list because the testimony could have corroborated the mother’s testimony regarding persecution in Egypt after her credibility had been put in doubt); *Lopez-Umanzor v. Gonzales*, [405 F.3d 1049, 1058-59](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (IJ violated due process in refusing to hear relevant expert testimony regarding domestic violence); *Kaur v. Ashcroft*, [388 F.3d 734, 737-38](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (IJ’s failure to allow alien’s son to testify as a corroborating witness resulted in prejudice); *Colmenar*, [210 F.3d at 972](#) (transcript showed the IJ pre-judged case and refused to hear testimony from alien about anything that was in written application, thereby preventing alien from elaborating on fears). *Cf. Almaghar v. Gonzales*, [457 F.3d 915, 921](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (concluding alien was not deprived of due process where allowed to present evidence, including expert testimony and country reports, and alien was able to testify at length).

9. Exclusionary Rule and Admission of Evidence

“The exclusionary rule is an exceptional remedy typically reserved for violations of constitutional rights.” *Hong v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 1030, 1034](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (internal quotation marks omitted). The rule generally does not apply in immigration proceedings. *See INS v. Lopez-Mendoza*, [468 U.S. 1032, 1050](#) (1984); *see also Hong*, [518 F.3d at 1034](#). “The blanket rule announced in *Lopez-Mendoza* did not address the potential exclusion of evidence in two circumstances. First, the rule did not cover instances where transgressions implicate fundamental fairness and undermine the probative value of the evidence obtained. Second, the Court did not address challenges to the INS’s own internal regulations.” *Hong*, [518 F.3d at 1035](#) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted).

“The inadmissibility of evidence that undermines fundamental fairness stems from the Fifth Amendment due process guarantee that operates in removal proceedings.” *Hong*, [518 F.3d at 1035](#). However, not all violations of agency regulations result in the exclusion of evidence in proceedings:

Instead, the BIA has adopted from the Ninth Circuit a two-prong test to evaluate the potential exclusion of evidence obtained through a violation of agency regulations. First, the regulation must serve a purpose of benefit to the alien. Second, the regulatory violation will render the proceeding unlawful only if the violation prejudiced interests of the alien protected by the regulation.

Id. (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). *See generally id. at 1035-36* (concluding that the admission of evidence showing that cancellation applicant derived her permanent resident status as a minor through her father, who had inappropriately secured his own status, did not violate due process).

10. Right to Confront and Cross-Examine Witnesses

“[H]earsay is admissible in immigration proceedings. . . . [I]n immigration proceedings the sole test for admission of evidence is whether the evidence is

probative and its admission is fundamentally fair.” *Rojas-Garcia v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 814, 823](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted); *see also Gu v. Gonzales*, [454 F.3d 1014, 1021](#) (9th Cir. 2006); *Hernandez-Guadarrama v. Ashcroft*, [394 F.3d 674, 681](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Saidane v. INS*, [129 F.3d 1063, 1065](#) (9th Cir. 1997). “[T]he government must make a reasonable effort in [immigration] proceedings to afford the alien a reasonable opportunity to confront the witnesses against him or her.” *Saidane*, [129 F.3d at 1065](#) (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also Shin v. Mukasey*, [519 F.3d 901, 906](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (admission of deposition testimony from former federal immigration official did not violate due process where official was cross-examined by alien’s counsel during the deposition, and official was made available during alien’s hearing if additional testimony was needed); *Cunanan v. INS*, [856 F.2d 1373, 1375](#) (9th Cir. 1988).

Although hearsay is admissible, “the constitutional and statutory guarantees of due process require that the government’s choice whether to produce a witness or to use a hearsay statement [not be] wholly unfettered.” *Hernandez-Guadarrama*, [394 F.3d at 681](#) (internal quotation marks omitted) (alteration in original). For example, admission of a hearsay statement of an allegedly unavailable declarant whom the government deported as sole evidence that the alien engaged in alien smuggling may violate due process. *See id. at 681-82* (due process violation found where government failed to make any reasonable effort to produce declarant, and where the declarant had been at risk of felony prosecution when he provided the statement); *see also Saidane*, [129 F.3d at 1065](#).

11. Production of Documents

An IJ’s refusal to order production of documents that may affect the outcome of proceedings can result in a violation of the alien’s due process rights. *See Ibarra-Flores v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 614, 620-21](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (directing IJ on remand to order production of all forms referencing alien’s prior departure, because the government’s inability to produce a voluntary departure form would be evidence that may affect the outcome of proceedings).

12. New Country of Deportation

The IJ's last-minute switch of the country of deportation has been found to violate due process where there was lack of proper notice. *Andriasian v. INS*, [180 F.3d 1033, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 1999) (asylum applicant, who had operated under belief based on instructions on agency forms and from the IJ that he needed to present evidence in support of his claim regarding Azerbaijan, was not informed of designation of Armenia as country of deportation until after the close of evidence).

13. Right to Translation

“Due process requires that an applicant be given competent translation services” if he or she does not speak English. *He v. Ashcroft*, [328 F.3d 593, 598](#) (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Perez-Lastor v. INS*, [208 F.3d 773, 778](#) (9th Cir. 2000). *Cf. Khan v. Ashcroft*, [374 F.3d 825, 829-30](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (alien's due process rights were not violated by IJ's failure to translate proceedings at master calendar hearing, where the alien requested and received a continuance, indicating that he was able to protect his interests at the hearing).

“In order to make out a due process violation, . . . the alien must show that a better translation would have made a difference in the outcome of the hearing.” *Kotas v. INS*, [31 F.3d 847, 850 n.2](#) (9th Cir. 1994) (internal quotation marks omitted). “In evaluating incompetent translation claims, [the court has] identified three types of evidence which tend to prove that a translation was incompetent. These are: direct evidence of incorrectly translated words, unresponsive answers by the witness, and the witness' expression of difficulty understanding what is said to him.” *Siong v. INS*, [376 F.3d 1030, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted).

14. Administrative Notice of Facts

When the agency takes administrative notice of events occurring after the merits hearing, it must provide notice to the parties and, in some cases, an opportunity to respond. *See Circu v. Gonzales*, [450 F.3d 990, 994-95](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (en banc) (IJ violated due process by taking judicial notice of a new country conditions report without providing alien notice and an opportunity to respond). Notice of intent to take administrative notice is all that is required if extra-record

facts and questions are “legislative, indisputable, and general.” *Id.* at 993 (internal quotation marks omitted); see also *Gonzales v. INS*, [82 F.3d 903, 911-12](#) (9th Cir. 1996); *Getachew v. INS*, [25 F.3d 841, 846-47](#) (9th Cir. 1994); *Castillo-Villagra v. INS*, [972 F.2d 1017, 1027-29](#) (9th Cir. 1992). However, “more controversial or individualized facts require *both* notice to the [alien] that administrative notice will be taken *and* an opportunity to rebut the extra-record facts or to show cause why administrative notice should not be taken of those facts.” *Circu*, [450 F.3d at 993](#) (emphasis and alteration in original) (internal quotation marks omitted). An example of an indisputable fact is a political party’s victory in an election, whereas a controversial fact is whether the election has vitiated any previously well-founded fear of persecution. *Id.* at 994.

If an IJ takes administrative notice of changed country conditions during the hearing, there is no violation of due process because the applicant has an opportunity to respond with rebuttal evidence. See *Kazlauskas v. INS*, [46 F.3d 902, 906 n.4](#) (9th Cir. 1995); see also *Kotas v. INS*, [31 F.3d 847, 855 n.13](#) (9th Cir. 1994) (petitioners “were given ample opportunity to discuss the effect of [political] changes”); *Acewicz v. INS*, [984 F.2d 1056, 1061](#) (9th Cir. 1993) (“petitioners had ample opportunity to argue before the immigration judges and before the [BIA] that their fear of persecution remained well-founded”).

15. Right to Counsel

“Although there is no Sixth Amendment right to counsel in an immigration hearing, Congress has recognized it among the rights stemming from the Fifth Amendment guarantee of due process that adhere to individuals that are the subject of removal proceedings.” *Tawadrus v. Ashcroft*, [364 F.3d 1099, 1103](#) (9th Cir. 2004); see also *Ram v. Mukasey*, [529 F.3d 1238, 1241](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending); *Biwot v. Gonzales*, [403 F.3d 1094, 1098](#) (9th Cir. 2005); *Baltazar-Alcazar v. INS*, [386 F.3d 940, 944](#) (9th Cir. 2004). The right to counsel is codified at [8 U.S.C. § 1362](#). “[T]he statutory right to counsel exists so that an alien has a competent advocate acting on his or her behalf at removal proceedings.” *Hernandez-Gil v. Gonzales*, [476 F.3d 803, 808](#) (9th Cir. 2007). This court reviews de novo whether the statutory right to counsel was violated. See *Mendoza-Mazariegos v. Mukasey*, [509 F.3d 1074, 1080](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

An IJ's failure to inquire as to whether a petitioner wants an attorney present may violate due process. *See Tawadrus*, [364 F.3d at 1105](#). For an applicant to appear pro se, there must be a knowing and voluntary waiver of the right to counsel. *Id.* at 1103. For a waiver to be valid, the IJ must “(1) inquire specifically as to whether petitioner wishes to continue without a lawyer; and (2) receive a knowing and voluntary affirmative response.” *Id.* (internal citations omitted). Failure to obtain a knowing and voluntary waiver may be an abuse of discretion. *Id.*; *see also Ram*, [529 F.3d at 1242](#) (“[E]ven for the most competent alien, the IJ has an affirmative duty to assess whether any waiver of counsel is knowing and voluntary.”). “If the prejudice is so great as to potentially affect the outcome of the proceedings, the denial of counsel amounts to a violation of due process.” *Tawadrus*, [364 F.3d at 1103](#); *see also Ram*, [529 F.3d at 1242](#).

“When an immigrant has engaged counsel and the IJ is aware of the representation, if counsel fails to appear, the IJ must take reasonable steps to ensure that the immigrant’s statutory right to counsel is honored.” *Hernandez-Gil*, [476 F.3d at 808](#) (concluding alien was denied his statutory right to counsel); *see also Mendoza-Mazariegos*, [509 F.3d at 1084](#) (same).

Although for due process violations there must be a showing of prejudice for relief to be granted, it is an open question in this circuit whether a petitioner must show prejudice when he has been denied the statutory right to counsel in removal proceedings. *See Mendoza-Mazariegos*, [509 F.3d at 1084-85](#); *Hernandez-Gil*, [476 F.3d at 808](#); *Biwot*, [403 F.3d at 1100](#); *Baltazar-Alcazar*, [386 F.3d at 947](#).

16. Ineffective Assistance of Counsel

“Individuals in immigration proceedings do not have Sixth Amendment rights, so ineffective assistance of counsel claims are analyzed under the Fifth Amendment’s due process clause.” *Blanco v. Mukasey*, [518 F.3d 714, 722](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (denying ineffective assistance of counsel claim because petitioner failed to show that counsel’s performance denied him a right to a “full and fair hearing” where “counsel diligently examined and cross-examined witnesses, argued points of law before the IJ and informed [petitioner] of his right to appeal.”). “[I]f an individual chooses to retain counsel, his or her due process right includes a right to *competent representation*.” *Hernandez v. Mukasey*, [524](#)

[F.3d 1014, 1017](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (mandate pending) (internal quotation marks omitted) (emphasis in original). However, “reliance upon the advice of a non-attorney cannot form the basis of a claim for ineffective assistance of counsel.” *Id.* at [1020](#) (rejecting due process claim based on deficient advice from non-attorney immigration consultant).

Due process claims based on ineffective assistance of counsel must generally comply with the requirements set forth in *Matter of Lozada*, [19 I. & N. Dec. 637](#) (BIA 1988). See *Melkonian v. Ashcroft*, [320 F.3d 1061, 1071-72](#) (9th Cir. 2003). The alien must: “(1) provide an affidavit describing in detail the agreement with counsel; (2) inform counsel of the allegations and afford counsel an opportunity to respond; and (3) report whether a complaint of ethical or legal violations has been filed, and if not, why.” *Id.* at [1072](#). “The *Lozada* factors are not rigidly applied, especially where their purpose is fully served by other means.” *Morales Apolinar v. Mukasey*, [514 F.3d 893, 896](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (concluding that petitioner substantially complied with *Lozada* requirements, despite failure to confront attorney directly or report misconduct to a disciplinary authority); see also *Ray v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 582, 588](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (observing that the court has “not hesitated to address ineffective assistance of counsel claims even when an alien fails to comply strictly with *Lozada*”). Noncompliance with *Lozada* will be excused where the “facts are plain on the face of the administrative record.” *Castillo-Perez v. INS*, [212 F.3d 518, 525](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (internal quotation marks omitted).

Cross Reference: Motions to Reopen or Reconsider Immigration Proceedings

17. Waiver of Appeal

“A waiver of the right to appeal a removal order must be considered and intelligent or it constitutes a deprivation of the right to appeal and thus of the right to a meaningful opportunity for judicial review.” *Biwot v. Gonzales*, [403 F.3d 1094, 1098](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (internal quotation marks omitted); see also *Rendon v. Mukasey*, [520 F.3d 967, 972](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (rejecting due process contention that petitioner’s waiver “of his right to challenge the finding of removability based on” a conviction was not “considered and intelligent” where IJ gave detailed instructions on how to file an appeal, and petitioner failed to present arguments concerning his conviction before the BIA where he had ample opportunity to do

so); *United States v. Jimenez-Borja*, [378 F.3d 853, 859](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (where alien consented to deportation and waiver of appeal, the IJ's failure to advise him of available relief resulted in a due process violation; however, there was no prejudice because he was not ultimately eligible for the relief); *Matter of Rodriguez-Diaz*, [22 I. & N. Dec. 1320, 1323, 1324 n.2](#) (BIA 2000) (in cases involving unrepresented aliens, more detailed explanations of appeal rights are often needed).

18. Right to File Brief

The BIA's refusal to allow an appellant to file a brief may violate an alien's due process rights. *See Singh v. Ashcroft*, [362 F.3d 1164, 1168-69](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (BIA violated due process by refusing to accept late brief where alien followed all regulations and procedures but the BIA sent the briefing schedule and transcript to an incorrect address). *Cf. Rojas-Garcia v. Ashcroft*, [339 F.3d 814, 822](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (no due process violation where failure to file a brief was caused by counsel's mistake, as opposed to a deficiency in BIA's procedures).

This court has held that due process was violated when the BIA dismissed a motion before the expiration of the filing deadline based on an alien's failure to file a supporting brief. *See Yeghiazaryan v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 994, 998-99](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (BIA violated due process in dismissing motion prior to expiration of 90-day time limitation on motions to reopen, because supporting documentation need not be submitted concurrently with the motion).

The BIA may violate an alien's due process rights if it summarily dismisses an appeal for failing to file a brief, where the notice of appeal is sufficiently detailed to put the BIA on notice of the issues on appeal. *See Garcia-Cortez v. Ashcroft*, [366 F.3d 749, 753-54](#) (9th Cir. 2004). *Cf. Singh v. INS*, [361 F.3d 1152, 1157](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (summary dismissal appropriate where alien failed to file a brief when he indicated he would on appeal form and his notice of appeal failed to describe grounds for appeal with requisite specificity).

19. Consideration of Evidence by Agency

The BIA may violate an alien's due process rights on appeal if it fails to consider relevant evidence. *See Larita-Martinez v. INS*, [220 F.3d 1092, 1095](#) (9th

Cir. 2000) (due process claim that BIA failed to review all relevant evidence submitted in suspension of deportation case). However, for an alien to prevail on such a due process claim, the alien must overcome the presumption that the BIA considered the evidence. *Id.* at 1095-96; *see also Fakhry v. Mukasey*, [524 F.3d 1057, 1066 n.12](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (concluding IJ did not violate due process despite IJ's initial statement that he had not fully reviewed the record, where IJ went off record to review the record and later stated he had reviewed the complete record).

20. Notice of Evidentiary Requirements

The BIA may violate due process by imposing new proof requirements without notice. *See Singh v. INS*, [213 F.3d 1050, 1053-54](#) (9th Cir. 2000) (due process violation where BIA newly required an alien moving to reopen proceedings held in absentia to produce an affidavit from his employer or doctor, and to have contacted the immigration court). *Cf. Celis-Castellano v. Ashcroft*, [298 F.3d 888, 891-92](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (petitioner had notice of BIA's evidentiary requirements and did not explain lack of evidence or failure to notify immigration court).

21. Intervening Law

Application of intervening law without notice does not violate due process. *See Theogene v. Gonzales*, [411 F.3d 1107, 1112-13](#) (9th Cir. 2005).

22. Sua Sponte Credibility Determinations

The BIA may not make an adverse credibility determination in the first instance unless the applicant is afforded certain due process protections. *See Mendoza Manimbao v. Ashcroft*, [329 F.3d 655, 661](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (holding that due process was violated where the IJ made a credibility observation but failed to make an express credibility determination and noting that under [8 C.F.R. § 1003.1\(d\)\(3\)\(I\)](#) "the BIA would have no choice but to remand to the IJ for an initial credibility determination, as the BIA is now limited to reviewing the IJ's factual findings, including credibility determinations, for clear error"). *Cf. Lin v. Gonzales*, [472 F.3d 1131, 1136 n.1](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (BIA did not violate due process by denying asylum application on a ground not previously discussed by IJ,

where IJ discussed the asylum requirements and gave petitioner notice that he failed to meet his burden of proof).

Where the IJ makes an adverse credibility determination and the BIA affirms that determination for different reasons, there is no due process violation because the applicant was on notice that credibility was at issue. *Pal v. INS*, [204 F.3d 935, 939](#) (9th Cir. 2000).

Where an applicant had no notice that an adverse credibility determination could be based on his failure to call a witness to corroborate his testimony, due process required a remand for a new hearing. *Sidhu v. INS*, [220 F.3d 1085, 1092](#) (9th Cir. 2000).

Cross reference: Credibility Determinations

F. Due Process Challenges to Certain Procedures and Statutory Provisions

1. Summary Affirmance

The BIA's summary affirmance procedure does not violate due process. *See Falcon Carriche v. Ashcroft*, [350 F.3d 845, 848](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (cancellation of removal); *Garcia-Martinez v. Ashcroft*, 371 [F.3d 1066, 1078-79](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (same in asylum context); *see also Valencia-Alvarez v. Gonzales*, [469 F.3d 1319, 1323](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (rejecting challenge to BIA's streamlining procedure because streamlining does not violate due process under *Falcon Carriche*, and petitioner failed to show that court could not adequately determine BIA's reasons for denying relief, or that BIA abused its own regulations in streamlining); *Jiang v. Gonzales*, [425 F.3d 649, 654](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (rejecting petitioner's argument that summary affirmance procedures violated his right to an administrative appeal and concluding that the contention was foreclosed by *Falcon Carriche*); *see also Kumar v. Gonzales*, [439 F.3d 520, 523-24](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (although BIA violated regulation governing summary affirmance procedures by including a footnote, the addition of the footnote did not prejudice petitioners or affect the outcome of proceedings).

Note that the BIA errs by summarily affirming the IJ's decision where the petitioner challenges procedural irregularities of the proceedings before the IJ. *See Montes-Lopez v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 1163, 1165](#) (9th Cir. 2007). Furthermore, the BIA abuses its discretion when it reduces the voluntary departure period in a streamlined opinion. *See Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 980-81](#) (9th Cir. 2006). Additionally, where the IJ denies relief on alternative reviewable and unreviewable grounds and the BIA issues a streamlined opinion, this court may remand to the BIA. *See Lanza v. Ashcroft*, [389 F.3d 917, 932](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (remanding where IJ denied relief on alternative grounds and the court was unable to determine whether BIA's streamlined opinion was based on a reviewable or unreviewable ground).

Cross Reference: Streamlined Cases

2. Reinstated Removal Proceedings

In *Morales-Izquierdo v. Gonzales*, [486 F.3d 484, 495-96](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc), the court held that the reinstatement procedures in [8 C.F.R. § 241.8](#) constitute a valid interpretation of the INA and do not offend due process. *See also Martinez-Merino v. Mukasey*, [525 F.3d 801, 803-05](#) (9th Cir. 2008).

“Reinstatement of a prior removal order – regardless of the process afforded in the underlying order – does not offend due process because reinstatement of a prior order does not change the alien’s rights or remedies.” *Morales-Izquierdo*, [486 F.3d at 497](#).

3. IIRIRA

The application of IIRIRA to place aliens in removal rather than deportation proceedings does not by itself amount to a due process violation. *See Vasquez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [324 F.3d 1105, 1008-09](#) (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Lopez-Urenda v. Ashcroft*, [345 F.3d 788, 796](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (rejecting claim that “placement in removal proceedings is so fundamentally unfair as to amount to a denial of due process”); *Ramirez-Zavala v. Ashcroft*, [336 F.3d 872, 874-75](#) (9th Cir. 2003) (alien who tried to file for suspension of deportation was not eligible for such relief because her removal proceedings commenced with the filing of a Notice to Appear); *Jimenez-Angeles v. Ashcroft*, [291 F.3d 594, 600](#) (9th Cir. 2002)

(same). *Cf. Hernandez de Anderson v. Gonzales*, [497 F.3d 927, 935-44](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (concluding that IIRIRA’s repeal of suspension of deportation under former 8 U.S.C. § 1254(a)(2) was impermissibly retroactive as applied to the alien, who had the right to seek suspension of deportation when she applied for naturalization 18 months prior to IIRIRA’s effective date).

The retroactive application of the stop-time rule in section 309(c)(5)(A) of IIRIRA does not violate due process. *See Ram v. INS*, [243 F.3d 510, 516-19](#) (9th Cir. 2001).

Additionally, the ten-year continuous physical presence requirement for cancellation of removal eligibility in 8 U.S.C. § 1229b(b)(1)(A) and the stop-time rule of section 1229b(d)(1) do not violate substantive due process. *See Padilla-Padilla v. Gonzales*, [463 F.3d 972, 978-79](#) (9th Cir. 2006).

II. Miscellaneous Constitutional Issues

A. Equal Protection Generally

Aliens are entitled to the benefits of the Equal Protection Clause. *Granados-Oseguera v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 993, 996](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (rehearing granted); *see also Halaim v. INS*, [358 F.3d 1128, 1135](#) (9th Cir. 2004) (Lautenberg Amendment, which lowered the burden of proof for some categories of refugees, did not violate equal protection). However, “Congress has broad authority over the admission and expulsion of aliens.” *Granados-Oseguera*, [464 F.3d at 996](#) (internal quotation marks omitted). “[A] statute limiting relief available to certain classes of aliens must be ‘wholly irrational’ to violate equal protection standards.” *Id.* [at 996-97](#); *see also Hernandez-Mezquita v. Ashcroft*, [293 F.3d 1161, 1163-64](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (filing deadline for NACARA relief did not violate equal protection); *Perez-Oropeza v. INS*, [56 F.3d 43, 45-46](#) (9th Cir. 1995) (limited eligibility for family unity waiver did not violate equal protection).

To establish an equal protection violation, the petitioner “bears the burden to negate every conceivable basis which might support [a legislative classification] . . . whether or not the basis has a foundation in the record.” *Granados-Oseguera*, [464 F.3d at 997](#) (alteration in original) (internal quotation marks omitted).

1. NACARA

Limitations by country of origin on the availability of NACARA special rule cancellation of removal do not violate equal protection. *See Jimenez-Angeles v. Ashcroft*, [291 F.3d 594, 602-03](#) (9th Cir. 2002); *Ram v. INS*, [243 F.3d 510, 517](#) (9th Cir. 2001); *see also Masnauskas v. Gonzales*, [432 F.3d 1067, 1071 n.5](#) (9th Cir. 2005) (NACARA §§ 202 and 203's nationality-based classifications do not violate equal protection); *Hernandez-Mezquita v. Ashcroft*, [293 F.3d 1161, 1163-65](#) (9th Cir. 2002) (NACARA limitation based on whether an applicant filed an asylum application by April 1, 1990 deadline does not violate equal protection or due process).

2. Voluntary Departure

This court has held that “treating those aliens permitted voluntary departure differently, with respect to the window for filing a motion to reopen, from those not granted voluntary departure,” does not violate equal protection. *Granados-Oseguera v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 993, 997](#) (9th Cir. 2006) (rehearing granted); *see also de Martinez v. Ashcroft*, [374 F.3d 759, 764](#) (9th Cir. 2004).

Furthermore, [8 U.S.C. § 1229c\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#), which draws a distinction for purposes of voluntary departure eligibility between aliens present in the United States for at least a year, and those present for less than a year, does not violate equal protection. *See Tovar-Landin v. Ashcroft*, [361 F.3d 1164, 1167](#) (9th Cir. 2004). Although “some people under somewhat similar circumstances might manage to remain long enough to accrue some benefit or other . . . the [petitioner's] constitutional rights have [not] been violated.” *Id.* ([internal quotation marks omitted](#)).

3. [8 C.F.R. § 1003.44](#)

[8 C.F.R. § 1003.44\(k\)\(2\)](#), which permits aliens who were in proceedings before a certain date to file a motion to reopen to seek discretionary relief, but excludes aliens who were issued a final order of deportation or removal and then illegally returned to the United States, does not violate equal protection. *See Avila-Sanchez v. Mukasey*, [509 F.3d 1037, 1041](#) (9th Cir. 2007); *see also Alvarenga-Villalobos v. Ashcroft*, [271 F.3d 1169, 1174](#) (9th Cir. 2001) (explaining

that “[t]he government has a legitimate interest in discouraging aliens who have already been deported from illegally reentering, and this distinction is rationally related to that purpose”).

4. [8 U.S.C. § 1182\(h\)](#) Waiver

[8 U.S.C. § 1182\(h\)](#) “provides the Attorney General with discretion to waive certain deportation orders.” *Taniguchi v. Schultz*, [303 F.3d 950, 956](#) (9th Cir. 2002). Although section 1182(h) provides “a waiver of deportation to non-[lawful permanent resident] aggravated felons while denying such a waiver to [lawful permanent resident] aggravated felons,” the distinction does not violate equal protection. *Id.* at [957-58](#).

5. Availability of Discretionary Relief

This court has “held that when the basis upon which the [government] seeks deportation is identical to a statutory ground for exclusion for which discretionary relief [under former INA § 212(c)] would be available, the equal protection component of the fifth amendment . . . requires that discretionary relief be accorded in the deportation context as well.” *Komarenko v. INS*, [35 F.3d 432, 434](#) (9th Cir. 1994) (internal quotation marks and emphasis omitted); *see also Servin-Espinoza v. Ashcroft*, [309 F.3d 1193, 1198-99](#) (9th Cir. 2002); *Tapia-Acuna v. INS*, [640 F.2d 223, 225](#) (9th Cir. 1981).

Note that the pending case of *Abebe v. Mukasey*, No. 05-76201, presents an equal protection issue in this context. *Abebe* was argued and submitted to an en banc panel on March 25, 2008.

B. Suspension Clause

The Suspension Clause requires some judicial intervention in deportation cases. *See Lolong v. Gonzales*, [484 F.3d 1173, 1177](#) (9th Cir. 2007) (en banc).

The elimination of habeas corpus review over final orders of removal and deportation does not violate the Suspension Clause where judicial review of

petitioner's claims by a court of appeals exists as a substitute. *See Puri v. Gonzales*, [464 F.3d 1038, 1042](#) (9th Cir. 2006).

The court has also determined that a potential motion to reopen with the agency to assert a nationality claim can suffice to alleviate Suspension Clause concerns. *See Iasu v. Smith*, [511 F.3d 881, 892-93](#) (9th Cir. 2007).

C. Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act

Fernandez v. Mukasey, [520 F.3d 965, 966](#) (9th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) held that the qualifying relative requirement for cancellation of removal did not substantially burden the petitioners' religious exercise. Petitioners had argued that the qualifying relative requirement violated free exercise of their religion where they were unable to have a child, and religious beliefs prevented them from using in vitro fertilization. *Id.*